

All the Jews Biden has tapped for top roles in his new administration

From secretary of state to attorney general, a diverse cross-section of American Jewry is set to fill seats at the incoming president's Cabinet table and elsewhere in government

By JTA

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US President-elect Joe Biden speaks at The Queen theater in Wilmington, Delaware on January 7, 2021. He called the US Capitol protests one of the 'darkest days' in US history. (JIM WATSON / AFP)

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US President Joe Biden filled the months before

Inauguration Day lining up a slate of Cabinet secretaries, assistants and advisers, many of them Jewish.

Biden's choices reflect a diverse cross-section of American Jewry and possess expertise gleaned from decades of experience in government, science and medicine and law.

Here's a rundown of the Jewish names you should know as the Biden administration begins.

Anthony Blinken, Secretary of State

Blinken, a longtime Biden adviser with an extensive diplomacy resume, is the stepson of a Holocaust survivor whose stories shaped his worldview and subsequently his policy decisions, including in the Middle East. He holds mainstream Democratic

views about Israel and said during his confirmation hearing Tuesday that he wants the US to reenter the Iran nuclear deal — and that he would consult with Israel on Iran policy.

Anthony Blinken speaks at The Queen theater in Wilmington, Delaware, November 24, 2020.
(Carolyn Kaster/AP)

David Cohen, CIA Deputy Director

Cohen, who has long been involved in Jewish causes and issues, will occupy the job he held under President Barack Obama. He does not require confirmation, meaning that Biden's CIA has a top expert in Iran issues from Day One.

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David Cohen, seen here at a Capitol Hill hearing on Iran sanctions in 2011, was named to the No. 2 position at the Central Intelligence Agency.
(Brendan Hoffman/Getty Images via JTA)

Merrick Garland, Attorney General

Garland was blocked from joining the Supreme Court in the last year of the Obama administration. Now, he'll require Senate confirmation to become the country's top lawyer. In his speech after being nominated, he credited his grandparents, who fled anti-Semitism in Europe before coming to the US.

Merrick Garland shown in 2016, has been nominated to be the next attorney general. (Alex Wong/Getty Images)

Avril Haines, Director of National Intelligence

Haines was deputy director of the CIA under Obama and Biden reportedly considered her to run that agency. Her mother was the Jewish painter Adrian Rappin (originally Rappaport), and her non-Jewish father once wrote in an account about a trip with Haines to Israel that the nominee identifies as Jewish.

Avril Haines, US President-elect Joe Biden's nominee for director of national intelligence, speaks during her confirmation hearing on January

19, 2021, in Washington. (Joe Raedle/Pool/AFP)

Ronald Klain, Chief of Staff

Klain, a longtime Biden aide who was the president-elect's first major appointment in November, was previously chief of staff to Biden in his vice president days and to Vice President Al Gore. He has maintained ties with his childhood synagogue in Indianapolis, where he famously learned multiple Torah portions for his bar mitzvah, and has spoken about his commitment to raising Jewish children.

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Ron Klain, then President Obama's 'ebola czar,' in Washington, DC, January 13, 2015. (Bill O'Leary/The Washington Post/Getty Images)

Eric Lander, Office of Science and Technology Policy

director

Lander, a leading geneticist, will require Senate confirmation after Biden elevated his position to the Cabinet level. After he was criticized for toasting James Watson, the scientist who is credited with discovering the shape of DNA and who also expressed racist and sexist views, Lander said he, too, had been the subject of anti-Semitic comments by Watson.

US President-elect Joe Biden, right, listens as his nominee for the director of the Office of Science and Technology Policy and adviser on science Eric Lander speaks during an event in Wilmington, Delaware, January 16, 2021. (AP Photo/Matt Slocum)

Rachel Levine, deputy health secretary

Levine, raised in a Conservative Jewish home in Massachusetts, is Pennsylvania's health secretary. She is the first known transgender person to be nominated for a position that requires Senate confirmation.

Pennsylvania Secretary of Health Dr. Rachel Levine meets with the media at the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency (PEMA) headquarters in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, May 29, 2020. (Joe Hermitt/The Patriot-News via AP, File)

Alejandro Mayorkas, Secretary of Homeland Security

Mayorkas, 60, the deputy secretary of Homeland Security under President Barack Obama, was born in Cuba to a Cuban Jewish father and Romanian Jewish mother who survived the Holocaust. He has

worked closely with Jewish groups and spoken often about the specific threats facing American Jews. An array of Jewish groups sought a swift confirmation given the threat of extremist violence surrounding the presidential transition, but a Republican senator who supported overturning the election results blocked that possibility on Tuesday.

Alejandro Mayorkas, on Capitol Hill in Washington, Thursday, July 25, 2013. (AP Photo/J. Scott Applewhite)

Anne Neuberger, National Security Agency cybersecurity director

An Orthodox Jew originally from Brooklyn and educated through college in Orthodox schools, Neuberger has worked at the NSA for more than a decade. She helped establish the US Cyber

Command and worked as chief risk officer, where she led the agency's election security efforts for the 2018 midterms.

Anne Neuberger, an Orthodox Jew, was recently tapped to head the US National Security Agency's new Cybersecurity Directorate. (National Security Agency via JTA)

Wendy Sherman, deputy secretary of state

Sherman was the lead negotiator for the 2015 Iran nuclear deal and took the lead in advocating for the agreement with the Jewish and pro-Israel communities, later describing tensions with Israel and some American Jewish groups over the deal as "very, very painful." She has also played a role in hewing the Democratic Party platform to traditional pro-Israel lines.

US Undersecretary of State for Political Affairs
Wendy Sherman testifies on Capitol Hill in
Washington, Oct. 3, 2013, before a Senate Foreign
Relations Committee hearing. (AP Photo/Molly
Riley)

Janet Yellen, Treasury secretary

Yellen already made history as the first woman
chair of the Federal Reserve, but now she has been
appointed to be the first female Treasury secretary.
The respected centrist was one of three Jews
featured in a 2016 Trump attack ad that reflected
longstanding anti-Semitic tropes.